

VZCZCXRO7952
RR RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHPW RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHEK #1094/01 3031148
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 291148Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1472
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2722
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1085
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3109
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2495
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001094

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ OFFICIAL BRIEFS AMBASSADOR ON ISSUK KUL
OBLAST CONDITIONS

BISHKEK 00001094 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In an October 22 discussion with the Ambassador, Issyk Kul region officials outlined desires for increased tourism, expressed optimistic plans for a shorter road link to southern Kazakhstan and described needed investment at Tamchi Airport. Local schools will be shuttered for two months this winter due to power shortages. While Chinese influence is minimal in the region, local officials viewed an expansion of such influence as "dangerous." End summary.

Focus on Tourism

¶2. (SBU) During an October 22 lunch in Chok Tal (Issyk Kul oblast), Issyk Kul rayon (region) chief Tursbek Mansurov and his colleagues briefed the Ambassador on current and planned economic developments and activities. At first, Mansurov described the lack of food processing facilities for local produce before turning most of his attention to tourism, a mainstay of the local economy. He said that the local government would be promoting private lodgings, supporting casino development, and seeking "wealthy visitors." Mansurov claimed that 80% of tourists visiting the Kyrgyz Republic come to Lake Issyk Kul, and reminisced about visits by Nikita Khrushchev and Boris Yeltsin to the lake. However, he noted that the global financial crisis caused Kazakhs to reduce their real estate purchases in the region.

Tamchi Airport and the Almaty Highway

¶3. (SBU) Mansurov noted that Kyrgyz authorities had allotted funds in the current budget to begin construction of a shorter highway to Almaty in southern Kazakhstan. A new route would cut travel time between the Lake and Almaty roughly in half, to about four hours. Mansurov optimistically claimed that the road could be completed as early as next year, and said that the Kazakhs would also be investing in this project. (Note: This road project has

been discussed for years, but has been and probably will still continue to be delayed. End note.)

14. (SBU) Mansurov then noted that Kyrgyz authorities still had not secured investors to expand the Tamchi Airport, which is located between Balykchi and Cholpon Ata on Issyk Kul's northern shore. The airport runway is two kilometers in length, but needs to be expanded another 1.8 kilometers to service Boeing aircraft. (Note: Tamchi Airport is apparently an emergency diversion point for aircraft destined for Manas Airport outside of Bishkek. End note.)

Short on Power

15. (SBU) Complaining of low water levels in Kyrgyz rivers which feed the Kyrgyz Republic's hydroelectric stations, Mansurov said public buildings would be shifting to coal power -- a return, he said, to "pre-electricity times." He confirmed that regional schools would be closed for two months (January and February) due to power shortages.

Chinese Neighbors

16. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's question about Chinese investment in the region, Mansurov noted the changing ethnic balance in China's Xinjiang province and told the Ambassador that increased Chinese activity in the Kyrgyz Republic would be "dangerous." He feared that Chinese citizens would come to the Kyrgyz Republic, and not leave. "We have Chinese goods here, but no Chinese," he added. Mansurov said the only Chinese now are in Bishkek. Mansurov,

BISHKEK 00001094 002.2 OF 002

as well as Aziz Aldashev, the deputy head of the Cholpon Ata town council, had all recently visited China on official visits.
GFOELLER